

PRESS RELEASE

Timberline Fire Protection District Acquires the Fritz Peak Observatory Public Open House: May 9, 2022 @ 5:00PM

We are excited to announce that Timberline Fire Protection District has taken ownership of the Fritz Peak Observatory, located at 19126 Highway 119, Black Hawk CO 80422. The Observatory includes the 3-story main building, the 2-bedroom cottage that sits behind the main building, and Dutch Peak which is the observation site that you can see from most of the Rollinsville valley. Our journey started in 2017, when Timberline was looking for a permanent home near Rollinsville. Through friends, we were made aware that this federal facility may be disposed of in the coming years. The possibility of acquiring the Observatory seemed too good to be true for Timberline Fire, the community, and emergency response to the north end of Gilpin County however it is now a reality!

We certainly have many ideas on how we will transform this property in the coming years, but our first goal is a detailed assessment of the current condition. We are aware of several issues that will need to be addressed including roof leaks, septic issues, and an overall basic safety remodel to name a few. In the very near future, we plan to reinstall garage doors in their old locations allowing us to begin responding from the station with small vehicles. Shortly afterward, we will be designing and working on cost estimates to add fire apparatus bays to the north side of the building. With this additional operational space, an increased number of firefighters can be on duty expanding our current resident, shift, and overnight firefighter programs and accommodations. We anticipate reduced response times to the north end of the county once we are fully functional.

We know that many people in the area have driven past the Observatory for years and wondered what it looks like inside. Today it is empty as the observation equipment has been removed, but it is still interesting to see! **Timberline would like to invite the public to an Open House on May 9th from 5:00-7:00PM, followed by our monthly Board of Directors meeting at 7:00PM.**

This building was first built as the Severance Lodge in 1946 by Horace "Skip" Severance and his wife Dorothy. In the late 1950's scientists began using the facility for star research including studying the Aurora Borealis. We are still learning about the history of the building and would appreciate any information that the community would like to share.

Timberline is honored and excited to give the Fritz Peak Observatory a third life. Final plans, remodel, and build-out will take time and careful planning. The ability to obtain this large facility in such a great location at NO cost to our residents is simply incredible.

This acquisition would not have been possible with the help and support of all the following:

NOAA

Carol Ciufolo

Megan Melamed

Dr. David Fahey

Eric Williams

[Special thanks to Wanda Sundquist and Bonnie Nash, both of Gilpin County, for their continued assistance and support throughout the process.](#)

GSA

Mr. Will Morgan
Bettina Alcantar

FEMA

Justin Dowdy

Gilpin County

Sandy Hollingsworth, Commissioner
Web Sill, Commissioner
Linda Isenhardt, Commissioner

Kevin Armstrong, Gilpin County Sheriff
Nate Whittington, Gilpin County Emergency Manager

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Additional Support Provided by:

Vaughn Jones, Colorado Division of Fire Prevention and Control
Tim Griffin, United States Forest Service
Mark Gabriel, CEO and President of United Power
Holly Woodings, Vegetation/Construction Specialist of United Power
Sean Demeule, VP & General Manager of Ameristar Casino Black Hawk